

Workplace Responsibilities for People With Disabilities

People With Disabilities have contributed information in this guide to help you become successful in your life and in your career. This information was assembled to give you the tools you need to overcome the challenges you are faced with each and every day. Our goal is to teach people what both the Employer (Managers/Supervisors) and the Employee (People With Disabilities) needs to know to succeed as they work together.

EMPLOYERS (Managers/Supervisors) Need to Know:

(Extracted from DFEC In Motion.doc – Kendall's handout):

Applicable Federal Guidance

There are several laws and regulations supporting individuals with disabilities. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, drives the DFEC mission.

Section 501 prohibits discrimination based on disability in Federal employment and requires Federal agencies to establish affirmative action plans for the hiring, placement, and advancement of people with disabilities in Federal employment.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination based on disability in federally funded and federally conducted programs or activities in the United States, including employment programs.

Section 508 requires Federal agencies to procure, use, maintain, and develop electronic and information technology (EIT) that provides comparable access to and use by Federal employees and members of the public with disabilities, unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency. When an undue burden exists, agencies must provide an alternative means of access that allows individuals with disabilities use of the information and data (strengthened by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998).

§29 CFR Part 1614.203 "An agency shall make reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of an applicant or employee who is a qualified individual with handicaps unless the agency can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operations of its program."

There should also be information about discrimination presented here. Bobby Mowrey provided us the following Website links for research in this area:

http://www.eeoc.gov/abouteeo/overview_practices.html

<http://www.eeoc.gov/types/ada.html>

Managers and Supervisors – Success depends on you!

We need to remind Manager and Supervisor how people given the correct tools will perform and do an outstanding job. People With Disabilities also have a track record of doing the same and often excel beyond expectations.

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Managers and Supervisors need to create a culture in their office that supports all the people they are responsible for. People need to learn that is OK to talk about their special needs and health issues with other people, especially their immediate supervisor and a person they work closely with. People need to know about their situation because it may save their life someday. People With Disabilities need the tools to do their job and to get support from their management just like every other person in an office does. Sometimes what they need is just different than expected. Learn by communicating with people about their situation.

Focus on the results not the process. Many times the process can be improved when people work together and learn what other people need to do their job.

Establish support for people by educating them in staff meetings. Talk about resources your agency has in place and programs that are available to your employees. (CAP Program, DOT Disability Resource Center, Employee Assistance Programs, etc.)

Evaluate how teams will help people become successful. Do you have a backup in place for each function you are responsible for? Do you use delegation to get things done? These types of systems will build trust and help people communicate with each other and ultimately may help a person identify a trusted friend in the office. This may result in a more organized use of your resources (people and others).

Look to DFEC as a resource to learn how to accommodate your employees.

EMPLOYEES Need to Know:

You are the person at stake if you fail to tell people what you are dealing with and what you need to be successful in your career. Whatever the case, a disability, a medical situation, or a medication you take, you need to tell your immediate supervisor and a couple of people you trust in your office. Your life may depend on it!

Educate yourself about the situation you are in. You will learn risk factors and solutions to problems that may occur and you can share that information with the proper people in your office. It will help you become proactive and help you take care of yourself.

Learn what guidelines are in place that protects you at your place of employment. This will help you understand what you need to share with people and how it will help you.

Think outside the box – look at ways you can get the job you are responsible for done. Many times you may identify more efficient methods that can be adopted by other people.

Look for people who have similar problems and build a network of people who understand what you are experiencing. People will often be more than happy to help another person if they are given an opportunity. They may have already been there and done that and be willing to help you in your efforts to succeed.

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Make yourself available to help other people. There is nothing like the experience you will get when you help another person accomplish something. It not only helps your employer and that other person, it helps you feel a sense of accomplishment.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Websites, etc.

Real Life Stories

We mentioned how Christopher Reeves turned his situation into a public awareness tool. Being a role model is an extra benefit that not only gains support for the person in the situation, but also other people.

DFEC is working towards having Real Life Stories of local employees to help other people. While we would not put those stories in this document we could provide links to our Website to direct people to them.